

Ideologies in the Thematic Slogans of the 1984 – 2012 Olympic Games

Wu Cuihua

College of Foreign Languages, Three Gorges University
8 Daxue Road, Yichang City, Hubei Province, PA 443002, China
E-mail: wucuihua8719@126.com

Liu Lingling (Corresponding author)

College of Foreign Languages, Three Gorges University
8 Daxue Road, Yichang City, Hubei Province, PA 443002, China
E-mail: 283114272@qq.com

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Abstract

This paper spotlights the twelve slogans of the Olympic Games in order to critically analyze the ideologies underlying the discourse. By taking the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Halliday's (1994) systemic-functional grammar (SFG) as analytical tools, the paper endeavours to reveal the ideology that predominates in the ruling class and that may impinge on the ways in which the slogans are constructed and elucidated. Furthermore, the images of the host countries manifested in the slogans and their attitude towards and enthusiasm for the Olympic Games are construed. Last but not least, with the rapid development of political and economic globalization, the enhanced call for friendliness and harmony is clearly shown in the linguistic structures of these slogans by analyzing them diachronically.

Keywords: CDA, ideology, SFG, slogan, power

1. Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization of the world politics and economy and the formation of the multi-polar world pattern, the Olympic Games have gradually evolved into a kind of global sporting event. At the same time, due to the huge commercial interests involved in hosting the Olympics, the Games have been covered with strong political color and the depoliticalizing principle which they used to adhere to at the start of the Olympic movement has been abandoned. Although the thematic slogans of the Olympic Games are the manifestation of the dominant idea of the host countries and their attitude and enthusiasm towards the Olympic Games, they are also affected by the ideologies that predominate in the ruling class of the host countries. However, it is difficult to detect the relationship between power relations and ideologies simply from the surface structure of the thematic slogans. Therefore, the authors attempt to use Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis theory to realize the above goals.

2. Theoretical Basis

Critical discourse analysis is another term for critical linguistics. Critical linguistics adopts linguistic models such as systemic-functional grammar to reveal the ideology and power relations within a discourse. The major difference between a critical and a non-critical approach is that the former reveals "how discourse is made up of power relationship and ideology and how discourse is used to construct social identities, social relations and belief systems (Fairclough, 2003, P12)".

During the recent decades, critical linguists tend to replace or cover critical linguistics with what Fairclough advocates as critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA adopts Halliday's systemic-functional grammar as its analytical tool which combines a linguistic discourse analysis method with a theory concerning the function of language in politics and ideology (Fairclough, 2003, P25). In Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, language has three functions: textual function, interpersonal function and ideational function. The three functions determine the choice of transitivity, mood system and theme-rheme structure of discourse at the lexico-grammatical level. The selection perspective that Halliday advocates is favored by many critical linguists. Halliday holds that any discourse is the choice that the language user makes according to the use or function which it serves in a specific context. Therefore, he also believes that "language exists for its own function in society (Halliday, 1973, P65)", which is also an indication of functional-oriented SFG.

Critical linguists such as Fowler take language function into consideration in a larger social environment and they move out of the circle in which the speaker-oriented language function is given too much attention. They describe the function of language in society this way: "language plays the role of consolidating and strengthening the organization

constructed by language itself (Fowler etc.1979, P190).” Hence, in a sense, discourse analysis explores a new method of understanding society. Based on the completeness and thoroughness of the CDA method, this paper adopts CDA as the analytical tool to comprehensively analyze the thematic slogans of the Olympic Games. This is done from surface structure to inner composition so that the authors can reveal the hidden meaning of thematic slogans under the influence of international political and economic circumstances and the ideology that predominates in the ruling class of the host country.

3. The Thematic Slogans from 1984-2012

Although the first modern Olympic Games date back to 1896, there was not a fixed custom of devising a thematic slogan for each Olympic Games until 1984 when the 23rd Olympic Games were held in Los Angeles. Consequently, although the Olympic Games have a long history, the time when thematic slogans for the Olympic Games came into people’s vision is not that long. As a propaganda slogan of the host country to the outside world, the thematic slogan not only presents the dominant idea of host countries in holding this activity, but also manifests their attitude and enthusiasm in participating in this global sports event. Each thematic slogan is designed by the whole host country with everybody making their suggestions, so it is certain that each slogan has special connotations. This paper selected the slogans of the Olympic Games from 1984 to 2012 as discourse to conduct a critical analysis. The detailed information relevant to each slogan is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The detailed information of the twelve slogans

year	Host country	Host city	Time sequence	Property (Summer Or Winter Olympics)	Slogan content (English)	Slogan content (Chinese)
1984	America	Los Angeles	The 23rd	Summer Olympics	Play a Part in History	参与历史
1988	Korea	Seoul	The 24th	Summer Olympics	Harmony and Progress	和谐进步
1992	Spain	Barcelona	The 25th	Summer Olympics	Friends for Life	永远的朋友
1996	America	Atlanta	The 26th	Summer Olympics	The Celebration of the Century	世纪庆典
1998	Japan	Nagano	The 18th	Winter Olympics	From around the World to Flower as One	让世界凝成一朵花
2000	Australia	Sydney	The 27th	Summer Olympics	Share the Spirit	分享奥林匹克精神
2002	America	Salt Lake City	The 19th	Winter Olympics	Light the Fire within	点燃心中之火
2004	Greece	Athens	The 28th	Summer Olympics	Welcome Home	欢迎回家
2006	Italy	Turin	The 20th	Winter Olympics	An Ever Burning Flame	永不熄灭的火焰
2008	China	Beijing	The 29th	Summer Olympics	One World, One Dream	同一个世界，同一个梦想
2010	Canada	Vancouver	The 21st	Winter Olympics	With Glowing Hearts	用炽热的心
2012	Britain	London	The 30th	Summer Olympics	Inspire a Generation	激励一代人

4. Ideologies in the Thematic Slogans

For the sake of succinctness, classifying the twelve slogans into three groups according to their structure features would facilitate the macro understanding of the detailed analysis, see Table 2 as follows.

Table 2. A Classification based on the structure features

Verbal groups:	Play a Part in History; Share the Spirit; Light the Fire within; Welcome Home; Inspire a Generation
Nominal groups	Harmony and Progress; Friends for Life; The Celebration of the Century; An Ever Burning Flame; One World, One Dream
Prepositional groups	From around the World to Flower as One; With Glowing Hearts

The detailed analysis of the twelve slogans is going to be realized from two layers. The first layer is operated from the perspective of the three metafunctions of language in SFG. For the sake of the completeness of the analysis of the twelve slogans, the slogans that haven't been analyzed in the first layer will be construed mainly from the critical perspective, that is to say, their analysis will largely be based on a comprehensive consideration of the social, cultural and historical background of the slogans.

In Halliday's SFG, "the ideational function is to convey new information, to communicate a content that is unknown to the hearer (Hu, 2006, p312)". According to Halliday (2000), the ideational function is mainly realized by transitivity system. Transitivity system contains three components: participant, process and circumstance. In communication, we convey new information by making choices between different types of process, participants and circumstances. Halliday (2000) divides the commonly used process into six types: material process, mental process, relational process, behavioural process, verbal process and existential process. Through a detailed analysis of the twelve slogans above, we found that all the five slogans of the first group chose the material process. The reason is that language users can clearly illustrate their goals so as not to confuse the listeners by intentionally adopting the material process. Furthermore, by using the material process, the thematic slogans of the Olympic Games not only appear more direct but are also more persuasive. For instance, "play a part", "share the spirit", "light the fire", "welcome home" and "inspire a generation" are all the application of the material process. By intentionally adopting the material process, firstly, these slogans directly expressed the dominant idea of host countries towards holding the Olympics.

It is not difficult to find that the actors of the five verbal slogans are omitted deliberately, but we can still artificially complement the participants of the five slogans, namely, the actor and goal of each slogan so as to make the participants reappear as in the following: "Let's play a part in history", "Let's share the spirit", "Let's light the fire within", "Let's inspire a generation". The actor of "Welcome home" is the people of the whole of Greece, while the actor of the remaining four slogans can be considered as people all around the world. Therefore, analyzing either from the angle of participant or the angle of process, we can see that the five verbal slogans all express beautiful wishes of host countries towards the Olympics. Meanwhile, the selection of different verbs in the material process is firmly linked to the political intention of each host country. By making a close study of the slogan of the Sydney Olympics, we can easily understand that "share" means using or possessing something with others. The first signal the word "share" gives off is that Australia wants to set up a friendly and equal relationship with other countries in the world. In addition, what Australia wants to share with other countries is the "Higher, faster and stronger" Olympic spirit. Therefore, it is not difficult to find that "share the spirit" has fully expressed the concept and principle of the host country and there is no need to add circumstance to indicate Australia wants to share the spirit with other countries in any other ways besides the Olympic spirit. However, the omission of circumstance here is deliberate. The connotation that the host country wants to share the Olympic spirit with other countries can be grasped by the target audience at first sight, while the omission of circumstance also implies that the host country wants to share the economic and political interests brought by the Olympics with other countries as well.

The thematic slogan of the 23rd Los Angeles Olympics is "Play a part in History". Besides the use of material process to highlight the theme of appealing to people all around the world to participate in the Olympics, the host country America also made a special effort in designing the circumstance of this slogan. Recalling the world history of the 1980s, we can see that the Los Angeles Olympics was boycotted by the socialist group of countries in which the Soviet Union predominates, with the result that some socialist countries refused to join the Games. The special selection of circumstance "in history" implies that the Olympic Games constitute a great historical event and no country has any reasons to avoid it. Meanwhile, the intentional omission of the subject makes it clear that not only the host country should participate in the Games but the other countries as well. The intentional selection of "history" rather than "activity" or "game" to state the circumstance weakened the sense of sports event of the Olympic Games and strengthened the sense of mission and responsibility of the whole world to participate in the Olympics. This slogan

obviously put the countries resisting the Olympics in a disadvantageous position and implies that their refusal to take part in the Olympics means they are trying to escape history.

Through the analysis of the circumstance component above, we found that the slogans of the Barcelona Olympics, the Nagano Winter Olympics and the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics also have a clear and definite circumstance component. "For life" in "Friends for life" demonstrates the time range of friendship which Spain wants to establish with other countries of the world. "From around the world" in "From around the world to flower as one" demonstrates the geographic scope of being united with the whole world. The "within" in "Light the fire within" states the burning scope of the fire. Hence, the three slogans expressed each of the host countries' wish to establish long-term friendship, unite people all over the world and retain a permanent passion for the Olympics.

Besides the ideational function, language can also be used to manifest the relationship between speaker and listener, namely, language has interpersonal function as well. Interpersonal function is mainly realized by mood and modality. Mood refers to the speech role that the speaker adopts in the act of speaking and the speech role the speaker assigns to the listener (Halliday, 2000). At the beginning of this section, the author divided the twelve slogans into three types. Due to the particularity of the structure of the prepositional and nominal group, these two groups will not be analyzed from the perspective of interpersonal function. In the transitivity analysis we have done above, we have supplemented subjects for the first verbal slogans, so it is not difficult to find that the five slogans with subjects added are in the imperative mood. The use of the imperative mood in the language usually means that the speaker puts him/herself in a commanding role and the listener is placed in a position in which he/she should always obey the command. The Athens Olympics slogan adopting the imperative mood is not for its command sense and the reason is as follows. The first modern Olympic Games originated in Athens, but one hundred and eight years later in 2004, the Athenians finally won the bid for hosting the Olympic Games again. "Welcome home" fully reflects the warm welcome of the people of Athens towards the Olympics and, at the same time, it also suggests that Greece wanted to establish friendly harmonious political and diplomatic relations and economic relations with other countries and to get on well with them like members of the same family. All in all, the use of the imperative mood here has no command sense and on the contrary, it strengthened its appeal.

The remaining four slogans "Let's play a part in history", "Let's share the spirit", "Let's light the fire within", "Let's inspire a generation" all begin the same way. Although "let's" means both the speaker and listener are included, these slogans still have a command sense. The slogans "Let's play a part in history" and "Let's light the fire within" are both put forward by the host country America, but they are for the 23rd Los Angeles Olympics and the 19th Salt Lake City Winter Olympics respectively. As for America, which is known as the overlord of the world, it has been accustomed to act as a leading player in the world's political, economic and even sports activities. Then, adopting the imperative in the slogan to express its worldwide appeal and influence fully embodies the political intentions of America. As a developed country in the southern hemisphere, Australia put forward "Share the spirit" as the slogan of Sydney Olympics and undoubtedly, it is rich in meaning. On the one hand, "Share the spirit" indicates that Australia as a sparsely populated, resource-rich country is willing to share with other countries rather than develop alone and more specifically, the slogan manifests Australia's generous and elegant posture. On the other hand, the imperative of the slogan here also places Australia in a superior position. The 2012 London Olympics slogan is "Inspire a generation". Britain used to be called "the empire on which the sun never sets". However, after the prosperity brought by the industrial revolution, Britain's economic development is not as good as before. The deficiency of development potential caused by the aging population is the biggest obstacle that Britain faces in seeking new development at the moment. Therefore, the UK hopes to inject new vitality into social and economic development by hosting the Olympics. For this once-great old capitalist country, inspiring a new generation of young people is a long-term solution to maintaining enduring national development. Hence, "Inspire a generation" not only reveals the British desire to stimulate the spirit of sports of young people but also makes it clear that Britain hopes to activate the creativity of young people so that they become the mainstay of the country's development. For the sake of Britain's long-term development, this slogan is a self-assertive announcement to its people and the outside world. The adoption of the imperative not only makes the British identity as one of the world powers more prominent, but also enhances the appeal of the slogan itself. Finally, it is not difficult for us to find that the host countries, Britain, America, Australia, which adopt the four slogans above are all developed countries. As a consequence, these seemingly peaceful, friendly and positive slogans are still swayed by the ideologies of the host countries, and thus the adoption of the imperative in these slogans can be seen as the manifestation of the consciousness of power of the developed countries.

If we put the analysis of the process and the mood component together, it is not difficult to find that the adopting of the material process and the imperative mood fully manifested the self-confidence of the host countries including America, Britain, Australia and Greece. In the same way, putting the analysis of participant and the mood component together, we can find that the first person pronoun "we/us" hidden in the five slogans shows the intention of the four countries to shorten the distance between the host countries and the readers.

At the beginning of this chapter, we have divided the twelve slogans into three groups and the verbal group has been construed thoroughly from the perspective of process, participant and mood. In the analysis of the circumstance component, a prepositional slogan and a nominal one are also involved. For the integrity and thoroughness of the analysis, the following part will focus on the critical analysis of the rest nominal and prepositional groups based on the comprehensive consideration of their social, cultural and historical backgrounds.

The first nominal slogan is "Harmony and Progress" which was designed for the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. South

Korea's design of "Harmony and progress" is inextricably linked to the international situation and South Korea's foreign policy at that time. In 1988, the international situation was not stable for the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union continued. In order to strengthen cooperation and exchanges with other countries and enhance the international image of South Korea, the South Korea government put forward the peaceful reunification foreign policy and hosting the Olympics was a good opportunity to carry out that policy. Hence, the slogan of "Harmony and progress" embodies the political aspirations of the South Korea government in international exchanges. At the same time, its theme is the Olympics, thus it also means the organizers hope the Olympic arena can show a scene of harmony and progress. The slogan of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games is also a nominal group and we have already illustrated the implication of "for life" in the transitivity analysis above. Thus, is there any ulterior motive in taking "friends" as the slogan theme? Does the slogan only mean that the host country hopes that participating countries become friends forever and all athletes become friends forever? Obviously the host country hopes this slogan expresses more than that. In 1992, the collapse of the Soviet Union announced the ending of the bipolar pattern in which the Soviet Union and the United States stand for the two poles. Barcelona's slogan, "Friends for life", is consistent with the expectation of the people for the new world for this slogan shouted out the voices of the people of the world longing for peace.

"The Celebration of the Century" is the slogan of Atlanta Olympics of 1996. Since the first modern Olympic Games originated one hundred years earlier in 1896, "The Celebration of the Century" fully reflects the historical significance of this centenary. In addition, from the word "celebration" we can feel that the host country America depicts the Olympic Games as a splendid ceremony rather than a simple sports meeting. For the host country, being eligible to hold such a great centenary celebration is the manifestation of its political and economic strength and a full expression of its national pride as well. "An Ever Burning Flame" is the thematic slogan of the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin. Italy regained the right to host the Olympic Games in 2006 after the 1956 Cortina d' Ampezzo Winter Olympics and the 1960 Rome Olympics. Hence, "ever" and "burning flame" strongly expresses the enormous and long-lasting enthusiasm of Italians towards the Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement. "An Ever Burning Flame" clearly and succinctly expresses the spirit and values of the 20th Winter Olympics. The last slogan in the nominal group is the "One World, One Dream" which is tailor-made for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. It is not only beautiful in form but also rich in meaning. First of all, the repetition of "one" is in the form of a perfect parallelism with "world" and "dream". The double "ones" make a contrast at first, meanwhile, they achieve unity in semantics for the same meaning that the word "one" conveys in Chinese. Second, semantically, "One World, One Dream" epitomizes the essence and the universal values of the Olympic spirit---Unity, Friendship, Progress, Harmony, Participation and Dream. It also conveys the common aspiration of mankind to pursue a better future under the inspiration of the Olympic spirit. The brilliant achievements made by China since the reform and opening up, on the one hand, make it greatly improve its international status. On the other hand, its rapid rise also arouses the hostility of some Western developed countries like the United States. Therefore, the meaning of seeking common ground in the thematic slogan is intended to show that China pursues a foreign policy of peaceful reunification and China's development will not pose any threat to any other countries in the world. The slogan itself plays an important and positive role in "promoting Chinese cultural influence and moulding Chinese national image which rises into prominence peacefully" (Feng Xia, 2007, P75).

The slogans of the 18th Nagano Winter Olympics and the 21st Vancouver Winter Olympics are prepositional groups. The rich meaning of the Nagano slogan "From around the World to Flower as One" is mainly manifested in the word "flower". On the eve of the Nagano Winter Olympic bid, there was a popular poem named "Flower of life". The "flower" symbolizes color, life and true love in the poem. It is said that the Japanese were inspired by this poem, so they used the word "flower" in the slogan and verbalized this word so that it has the meaning of "unity"; in this way, the slogan fully expressed Nagano people's desire to unite people all over the world. "With Glowing Hearts" is the slogan of the 21st Vancouver Winter Olympics and it derives from the Canadian national anthem. According to the report of the Global Chinese Press, the organizers of the Vancouver Winter Olympics hope to make these Olympics a national sports meeting for Canada, so adopting the lyrics of national anthem as the slogan is a way of expressing this hope. Furthermore, "With Glowing Hearts" also reflects the sincerity and positive attitude of Canadians towards hosting the Olympic Games.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the authors conduct an analysis of the twelve slogans of the Olympic Games by adopting the interpersonal function and ideational function of systemic-functional grammar as the theoretical basis with a critical approach. This analysis reveals the host country's implied political intention hidden under the surface structure of the language used in the slogans. Through the critical discourse analysis of the twelve slogans using the framework of systemic-functional grammar and structural classification, the authors find that all the slogans conveyed the information of "harmony, unity, friendship and passion". Meanwhile, due to the huge economic and political interests in holding the Olympics, each host country made a special effort in designing the slogan so as to build and promote the positive national image of their country and achieve their own political and economic aims. On the whole, it can be seen from the thematic slogans of the Olympic Games that the Olympic Games are no longer pure international sports competitions which firmly adhere to the depoliticizing principle. Seen from the surface structure, the slogans serve as a tie to unite the people of the world to establish friendly relationships. However, if we take an in-depth analysis on them again, it is not difficult to find that they are all used by the ruling class of host countries as a tool to realize their own interests.

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